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Information

Professional Services Committee

Update on the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) Passport to TeachingSM Certification Program

Executive Summary: In 2003, the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (American Board or ABCTE) began offering teaching examinations for potential teachers seeking a national level license. The information provided in this item briefly describes the four exams that the American Board developed and currently administers.

Recommended Action: None.

Presenter: Dr. Kathleen Madigan, President, American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence

Update on the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) Passport to TeachingSM Certification Program

Introduction

In 2003, the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (American Board or ABCTE) began offering a standards based approach using individualized learning programs and set of rigorous examinations for potential teachers seeking a national level license. The Professional Teaching Knowledge exam and the Elementary Education exam were first administered in September 2003. The English Language Arts and Math content exams were administered in February 2004. ABCTE is recognized in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) as an approved provider (Title II, Part A, National Activities Section). Teacher candidates who meet ABCTE standards are considered "Highly Qualified" by the federal government. The information provided in this item briefly describes the four exams that the American Board developed and currently administers.

Background

The American Board bases certification on both a teacher's general pedagogical knowledge and in-depth subject matter knowledge. ABCTE plans to develop two levels of American Board certification: *Passport to TeachingSM* certification for aspiring teachers with a bachelor's degree in any field and *Master Teacher* certification. Certification through the *Passport to TeachingSM* program requires passage of an ABCTE subject matter exam in the area of certification and passage of a teaching knowledge exam. *Master Teacher* certification will serve to recognize experienced teachers for "exceptional subject-area proficiency and strong achievement gains by their students" (*Test Development Process: Executive Summary, June 2004*). At this time, the *Master Teacher* certification process is not available.

Purpose

The mission of the American Board is to create a certification system that is "rigorous and reliable, yet also efficient and cost effective, in order to facilitate entry of new people into the teaching profession" (*ABCTE Test Development Process: Executive Summary, June 2004*). To be eligible for the ABCTE *Passport to TeachingSM* program, candidates must have completed a baccalaureate degree, a background check and demonstrate mastery in their subject area and professional teaching knowledge.

The American Board currently offers four computer-based exams – Elementary Education, English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Professional Teaching Knowledge (PTK). The Elementary Education (K-6; EE) exam focuses on four content domains of knowledge including English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The English Language Arts (6-12; ELA) exam measures vocabulary, interpretation of expository and literary text, speech, writing and research strategies. The Mathematics (6-12; Math) exam covers number sense,

algebra/linear algebra, geometry, measurement, probability, statistics and data analysis, trigonometry and calculus. The PTK exam focuses on five topical areas including Organizing, Planning and Designing Instruction for Student Success, Effective Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management and Organization, Monitoring Students and Working with Parents, and Assessment. The American Board is planning to develop additional exams in the areas of General Science and Special Education.

The ABCTE charges teacher candidates \$500 for the *Passport to Teaching*SM certification tests (PTK and one content test) and services (e.g. self assessment, advising, and preparation program development) and plan to charge \$1,200 for the master teacher test. In addition to these fees, states may charge additional fees.

History of the American Board

Created in 2001 through a partnership between the Education Leaders Council (ELC) and the National Council on Teacher Quality, the American Board was developed to create options in teacher certification.

The National Council on Teacher Quality received a \$5 million dollar, two-year grant from the United States Department of Education's (USDOE) Fund for the Improvement of Education (September, 2001) for the purpose of creating the American Board. The American Board used a standards based approach to teacher certification including preparation resources, online advisors, and computer based teacher exams.

Passing scores were adopted for the Elementary Education (K-6), English (6-12), Mathematics (6-12) and the PTK exams in 2003. In 2003-04, the USDOE awarded the American Board an additional five-year, \$35 million dollar grant. This grant is intended to "implement innovative teacher recruitment strategies, expand subject area certifications, develop preparation resources, create mentoring programs using technology and fully evaluate the effectiveness of this approach" (*Test Development Process: Executive Summary, June 2004*). At this time, federal funding is ABCTE's primary source of revenue.

State Actions and ABCTE Passport to TeachingSM

Currently four states, Florida, Idaho, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania have considered and adopted the ABCTE *Passport to Teaching*SM as an alternative route to certification. The Florida State Board of Education and the New Hampshire State Board of Education voted in June 2004 to accept the American Board, *Passport to Teaching*SM as a new route to full certification for the state's public school teachers.

Idaho and Pennsylvania, which adopted the *Passport to Teaching*SM certification, had no other alternative certification programs and no required induction programs for new teachers; thus these two states added requirements for American Board certified teachers.

The Idaho State Board of Education approved the ABCTE program as an alternative certification route for candidates. At its November 4, 2003 meeting, the board approved the following Temporary Rule 08.02.02 Rules Governing Uniformity Section 45. This alternative route, on-line preparation program, requires the candidate to do the following:

1. The candidate must meet with an academic advisor and/or complete an assessment to determine the preparation needed to meet the Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel.
2. The candidate must complete identified on-line and/or in-class preparation materials.
3. Prior to entering the classroom the candidate shall meet or exceed the qualifying score on a test of content knowledge and pedagogy as approved by the State Board of Education.

In March 2004 the Idaho State Board added the requirement that ABCTE-approved teachers complete a two-year mentoring program. Idaho ABCTE teachers will also need to complete a background check (which is also required by ABCTE). These teachers will receive a three-year non-renewable interim Idaho teaching certificate. During the three initial years, Idaho requires that all new and out-of-state teachers (including ABCTE) are required to pass the state board-approved technology competency assessment and meet state literacy standards.

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education passed a resolution in November 2002 to recognize ABCTE *Passport to Teaching*SM as an acceptable alternative path to earn full state certification. In 2003, the Pennsylvania board modified its decision and gave the Secretary of Education the right to require ABCTE teachers to participate in a one-year induction process. Several induction parameters were negotiated with ABCTE. The induction process must be one of the state's 94 teacher preparation programs and include a set number of professional development activities. ABCTE teachers receive a temporary teaching permit, and will receive full certification upon completion of the induction requirements. In addition, the professional development activities completed during this first year will also count toward the teacher's continuing five-year license requirements.

As of July 1, 2004 eleven candidates have earned the *Passport to Teaching*SM in Idaho and Pennsylvania (American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence Press Release, July 1, 2004).